

**Recommendation Template**  
**(For the ECAC Steering Committee)**

**Select One:**

- **Budget Request**
- **Direct Agency**
- **Bully Pulpit**
- **Legislation**

**Recommendation Title/Name:**

Package of Support to Reduce Early Childhood Suspension and Expulsion and to ensure our youngest children and their families experience a strong and stable recovery from the COVID-19 crisis

**Description of the Recommendation:**

We are living during unprecedented times. Our young children and families are facing multiple layers of complexities and crises on a daily basis. Suspension and expulsion, as well as racial disparities, have been long standing issues in the world of early childhood. In addition, we are all living through a global pandemic. All of these things are traumatic for our infants, young children and families and can have long-term negative consequences on their development and well-being.

The effects of COVID-19, combined with the pre-existing conditions within early care and education, create the perfect storm for continued and worsening devastation for working families. Our economy rests on the foundation of child care and other early learning supports; and the lifelong health and well-being of our children rests on a solid foundation of healthy social and emotional development within the first 5 years.

This recommendation includes a package of supports that will help reduce the likelihood of suspension and expulsion in early childhood and aid the recovery of Wisconsin families from the COVID-19 crisis. The package will accomplish these aims by supporting both professionals and parents in healing, optimally functioning and maintaining stability in work, school and life. In alignment with the activities included in the Preschool Development Grant (PDG) application the package may include:

- Funding for increased social emotional development training and coaching support **\$5 million**
- Funding for the creation of a system of Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) **\$5.3 million**
- Funding for expansion of the Behavior Help Wisconsin **\$2.3million**

- Under the direction of DCF, create and support a statewide policy that requires early care and education providers to access supports and services before expelling or suspending a child.
- Increase awareness and knowledge about the importance of social and emotional learning and negative impacts of suspension and expulsion in early childhood

### **What is the evidence base to support the recommendation?**

- Infants and young children with challenging behaviors are more at risk of being suspended or expelled both in preschool and later in life. The results of three randomized-controlled evaluations showed that in classrooms, where teachers received IECMH consultation, children were rated as significantly lower on measures of hyperactivity, restlessness, externalizing behaviors, and problem behaviors when compared to children in classrooms where teachers did not receive the service.<sup>1 2</sup>
- Social and emotional competence can be significantly enhanced through formal instruction.<sup>3</sup> Social and emotional learning strategies and practices can be incorporated into early education classrooms. Multiple studies have shown that incorporating social and emotional development training and coaching support into early childhood programs improves children's learning, positive social behavior and reduces behavior challenges.<sup>4</sup>
- Results from Arizona's evaluation of the state-wide Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation program (Smart Support) demonstrated that consultation was promoting racial equity and addressing unconscious/implicit bias in early care and education system
- Empirical evidence has found that IECMH consultation is effective in increasing children's social skills, reducing children's challenging behavior, improving child-adult relationships, and identifying child concerns early, so that children get the supports they need as soon as possible. Findings were robust in both urban and rural settings. In addition, the consultation has been found effective in reducing teacher stress, burnout,

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<sup>1</sup> Gilliam, W.S., (2005). *Prekindergartners Left Behind: Expulsion Rates in State Prekindergarten Systems*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Child Study Center.

<sup>2</sup> Gilliam, W.S., Maupin, A.N., Reyes, C.R. (2016) Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation: Results of a Statewide Random-Controlled Evaluation; *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*

<sup>3</sup> Brackett, M.A., Rivers, S.E. and Salovey, P. (2011), "Emotional intelligence: implications for personal, social, academic, and workplace success", *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 88-103

<sup>4</sup> Ashdown, D.M. and Bernard, M.E. (2012), "Can explicit instruction in social and emotional learning skills benefit the social-emotional development, well-being, and academic achievement of young children?", *Early Education Journal*, Vol. 39 No. 6, pp. 397-405

and turnover. Preschool teacher stress and burnout have been previously associated with increased risk of expelling and suspending young children.

**What are the benefits/impacts from addressing the issue?**

1. The global pandemic presents both young children and adults with high degrees of trauma. Families are struggling. Wisconsin communities are experiencing high rates of stress, domestic violence, alcohol and drug use, economic turmoil and instability as a result of the pandemic. All of these factors are linked to high rates of child abuse and neglect. Infants and young children are especially vulnerable to their environment and the emotional states of the adults around them. The first 5 years of life are a critical time of rapid brain development--when children particularly need stable, sensitive, consistent and healthy caregiving. The COVID -19 global crisis has created an urgency to ensure our youngest children and their families are on track to build a strong foundation for lifelong health and wellbeing and to fully recover from the devastation of the pandemic. Adults and professionals need access to increased understanding of social and emotional learning and coaching support. The best strategy will incorporate universal social and emotional learning and coaching for all children, as well as support and consultation for children and adults who are struggling.
2. Early learning is critical; disruptions in early learning are detrimental to child outcomes. Social and emotional competence is fundamental for early learning and is comprised of a variety of skills including self-regulation, problem solving, perspective taking and awareness of others in addition to social skills<sup>5</sup>. Research has consistently demonstrated a positive correlation between young children's social and emotional competence and ongoing academic achievement.
3. Optimal social and emotional development can only happen in the context of healthy, supportive, relationships. The most effective strategies recognize the pivotal role relationships play in the health and well-being of young children. The best approaches are two-generational. They strive to build the relational capacities of the adults surrounding a child, so that in turn, they are empowered to address challenging behaviors while simultaneously strengthening the child's social and emotional development.
4. There are racial and gender disparities related to the use of suspension and expulsion in early care and education settings. Research demonstrates that access to IECMHC is

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<sup>5</sup> Hemmeter, M., Fox, L., and Snyder, P., (2013), "Coaching Early Childhood Special Educators to Implement a Comprehensive Model for Promoting Young Children's Social Competence", *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education* 31(3):178-192.

effective in reducing implicit biases which often contribute to the decision to suspend or expel a child. Early expulsion impedes the ability to create a strong foundation of social emotional development and does nothing to strengthen adult capacities to aid that development. There are high and disparate expulsion rates in Wisconsin's early care and education settings<sup>6</sup>

- Expulsion rates among Black children are 9.4 per 1,000 children enrolled, up to 2 times greater than their peers of other races.
  - Rate of expulsion among boys is 10.5 per 1,000 children, which is 4.4 times greater than girls.
  - Children enrolled to receive childcare subsidies through WI Shares are expelled at a rate 16.3 per 1,000 children.
  - With 47% of childcare providers identifying Birth to Three as a source of support, there is evidence that children with special needs are also experiencing higher rates of expulsion.
5. In Wisconsin, more than 70% percent of mothers of infants and toddlers are in the workforce. Almost one-quarter of children under the age of five are in some form of organized child care arrangement; approximately 39% of children in lower income families are enrolled in child care (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2011). Stable, quality child care is an essential pillar of America's labor market and economy, allowing millions of parents to go to work or attend school each day.
  6. Expulsion in preschool predicts expulsion and suspension in later grades. Early expulsion experiences can have significant harmful impacts on a child's trajectory for life, including various negative health outcomes. Early expulsion negatively affects social and emotional health because it interrupts children's learning of key skills, like self-regulation and forming relationships, and prevents the early identification or diagnosis of underlying behavioral or mental health issues. We also see that "young students who are expelled or suspended are as much as 10 times more likely to drop out of high school, experience academic failure and grade retention, hold negative school attitudes, and face incarceration than those who are not" (as cited by the U.S. DHSS and the U.S. DOE).
  7. There is no research or data that supports the effectiveness of expulsion.

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<sup>6</sup> In Brief: Enrollment, Expulsion and Resource Use in Wisconsin Child Care, 2015

## What is the Wisconsin specific context in current work?



- The [Wisconsin Pyramid Model](#) is a framework for implementing a culturally responsive and equitable multi-leveled system of supports designed to enhance social and emotional competence of young children, promote the development of program policies and practices, and provide early care and education providers with practice-based coaching to ensure that evidence-based practices are integrated and used with fidelity.

- over 11,500 individuals have been trained
- 98 trainers
- 9 training options designed to address and align with the specific professional development needs of Wisconsin's early care and education
- 13 cohorts of sites launched through Implementation Academies
- 4 training options for program-wide implementing sites
- 84 programs/sites have attended team training
  - 74 programs/sites who have implemented for at least 1 year
  - 24 programs/sites have demonstrated program level fidelity
- 305 internal coaches
- 10 program-wide external coaches
- Family Engagement:
  - Parents Interacting with Infants (PIWI)
  - Positive Solutions for Families
- **Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards:**
  - Guiding early care and education since 2003
  - 135 trainers
  - 383 individuals trained in 2018
  - Preliminary 2019 Data indicate 575 individuals have been trained
- **Conscious Discipline:**
  - 66 contracts with agencies
  - 93 speaking engagements
  - 123 instructor visits
- **PBIS:**
  - 113 tier 1 trained schools
  - 84 tier 2 trained schools
  - 60 tier 3 trained schools

- **Incredible Years:**
  - 103 leaders trained as of July 2019
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- **Triple P:**
  - 124 individuals have been trained
  - 12 agencies are implementing
  - 2 communities are using a collective impact process for implementing in multiple agencies
  - Implementing in Head Start and Early Head Start programs, Family Resource Centers, School-based mental health providers, Primary care clinics, Birth to Three programs, Home Visiting programs
  - Since January 2019 2,099 parents/caregivers have received a single dosage; 800 families and 819 caregivers have participated in more than one session
  - SFY 18 – 1,545 families and 2,260 parents and caregivers received Triple P
  - SFY 17 – 1,009 parents/caregivers received Triple P

**Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation-** is an evidence based collaborative intervention provided by a professional with mental health expertise that improves outcomes for all children. It builds adults' capacity to strengthen and support children's social and emotional health and development.

- Head Start Programs
- Individual childcare sites
- Family Foundations Home Visiting Programs receive regular and on-going reflective supervision, part of the consultation provided by highly trained and supported Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health consultants (20 consultants)

**Behavior Help Wisconsin** - is a tiered model of support for children, families and early educators aimed at addressing the key factors of early expulsion, including challenging behaviors, traumatic experiences and implicit bias.

- Two regions receiving model of support. Western counties: Chippewa, St. Croix, Dunn; Milwaukee zip codes 53204, 53206, 53210, 53215, 53218.
- 5 Referral Specialists, the first point of contact for families and childcare providers to receive support.
- 6 Quality Coaches (Social Emotional Development Coaches) supporting teacher practice and the learning environment utilizing Pyramid Model strategies.
- 5 Infant Mental Health Consultants (Social Emotional Development Consultants) providing support through the lens of trauma.
- 7 childcare providers receiving support from both Quality Coaches and Infant Mental Health Consultants, currently.

- Model of support for Coaches and Consultants through regular staffing meetings and reflective supervision.
- 15 project staff trained and reliable with the Climate of Healthy Interactions for Learning and Development (CHILD) Tool (Gilliam & Reyes, 2017).
- Additional workgroups on preschool suspension and expulsion
  - Suspension and Expulsion Workgroup lead by DCF- DCEC
  - Collective Impact Infant -Toddler Policy Workgroup

### **What is the probability/feasibility of the recommendation being implemented?**

Significant work has been done to develop and implement the proposed package. The feasibility is high. **Given the current status of the crisis upon crisis, we cannot afford not to bring meaningful supports to reduce expulsion, enhance social and emotional development, and mitigate the effects of trauma caused by racial disparities, economic hardship, and global pandemic**

We have a strong support of both the council and the workgroup

The urgency of now: First years of life is an incredible opportunity to set development on track and prevent lifelong suffering.

Mrs. Evers has social and emotional learning as one of her key efforts. Governor Evers stated what is good for Wisconsin children is good for Wisconsin.

In 2016 the US Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education issued a joint policy statement calling for a drastic decrease in early childhood expulsions. Infant Early childhood mental health consultation (IECMHC) was called out as an effective strategy for reducing preschool suspension and expulsion rates and strengthening social and emotional development of young children. Moreover, IECMHC has been recognized through research as an effective strategy in supporting a child's optimal social and emotional development, building the capacity of adult caregivers, and reducing their perceived levels of stress and frustration.